

Memorial Day - Charles Leorraine

among the bushy clatter

Early Sunday morning, right after breakfast, while the ~~noise~~ of early kitchen noises was the main sound around the house, my grandfather would be out cutting the largest peony buds, the lushest branches of lilacs and shafts of bleeding hearts dripping their delicate pink blossoms. He would put them all in pails and set them in the shade of the old astic~~k~~an apple tree. The tree itself, was too old to blossom but it was something against which an old bench was placed. It made a nice place to sit.

Then grandfather and I would go to church, ~~in~~ preparation for this event my grandmother put out my best pants and a jacket and a clean shirt. I would wear one of grandfather ties with the long end tucked inside my shirt. I would also have to have my shoes shined to take the scuff's off of the toes and all. The shoe shining equipment was kept in the bottom of the kitchen cabinets, and it always smelled of shoe polish. Grandfather would supervise my shoe shining, Grandmother would supervise my face, ears, fingernails and knees washing.

The church was a block two blocks away. I would walk at grandfather side, sometimes carrying his bible. We walked in a dignified way down the front walk and up the street, grandfather frowning at ~~untidy~~ walks that had not been swept and grass that had not been swept up from recent cuttings, ~~and~~ but otherwise not noticing anything either left or right. The street always seemed especially attractive to me. There were perhaps twenty houses between our house and the church, each with a large lawn and trees and shrubs, one or two with a decorative lawn planter ~~and~~ begonias. No one on the street took in roomers and flats, only one or two, in those days, had been divided into apartments. They were ~~several~~ flats. The ~~walls~~ sunny days were wonderful days for those houses. The sides would be covered ~~stenciled~~ with leafy shadows and outlines and even those that were not freshly painted

were uniquely part of a plot of land that somehow each house had a  
way of possessing. Each was two stories tall with a ~~flat~~<sup>hip</sup> roof and  
a fancy cornice and, at the time that I first got to know them, which  
was shortly after the first world war, they were only forty years old.  
They had verandas, most of them, that went around two sides. Each house  
sat back from the sidewalk at least thirty feet with fifty or so  
between them. Their clapboards were straight, not warped ~~with~~<sup>from</sup> foundation  
settling as some of them are now. It was before the time of artificial  
brink and stone-- each house appeared to be what it was, manmade and  
slightly affected. Since few of the families had maids housekeeping  
~~craft~~  
was ~~an~~<sup>sickly</sup> and I am afraid that there was little gracious living. There was  
~~(in a large galley or sunroom with a red bawle)~~  
busy scrubbing, cooking, ash shaking and carrying out, washing and  
mending and sewing and dusting and polishing and blind pulling down  
to keep the furniture upholstering and rug in the parlor from fading  
and conserving of goods and canning. There was not much budgeting since  
~~most people bought on cash terms and what there was was what people~~  
~~had.~~ There was security in the walk with grandfather to the church.  
since somehow this was another orderly way to live and be and it did  
not occur to grandfather that there was any other way, nor to me  
either.

The church, built slightly after the neighborhood,  
was of granite, not grey but brownish, modeled generally after the  
~~style of~~  
~~ashio set by~~ post offices and small town rail road stations and  
banks. Grandfather always sat in his own particular place. The minister  
sat in front dressed in a frock coat on a raised platform and behind him  
~~golden oak~~  
peeping over an handsome wooden sort of half partition was the choir  
~~third majestic tier,~~  
and behind them, rising in impressive majesty, the pipes of the organ.  
Now, on revisiting, the church seems small, but in those days it was  
~~national guard~~  
the largest space I had ever been in, except for the armory which I

*and*  
had visited once. The organ music was far and away the loudest noise I had ever heard, perhaps not the loudest, but certainly the most enveloping noise. The deep tones o' the base pipes, got inside me, and made me feel from time to time that I and the room must surely burst apart. But grandfather sat quitely, resisting my small panic. The sermons I do not remember, though I remember standing whær the minister stood one Sunday on childrens day and leading the congregation in the lords ~~parayyer~~ *Prayer* which I did not know beyond the first two lines, but it made no difference because everyone else seemed to and it went on the the finish without me. But I do remember that grandfather kept track o' the text used by the minister in his sermon, writing the date and the name o' the minster in the margin, ~~taking great delight when~~ he found one text being overdone, or minsters that seemd to draw conflicting meanings from a text.

Years later I came across Grandfathers ~~bible among his effects~~ and noted with surprise how many parts o' th' bible had, in all the thirty years grandfather kept his records, never been used ~~as the basis~~ or any sermon.

In church I was never given anything to play with or distract me from my boredom. and I was bored and the seats were hard, and when I was older I never joined a church that did not have cushions and I became consious often that the weavve in my pants was making a patern on my behind, but I would not wriggle or turn arround or get up on my ~~times~~ need and look over the back o' the pews. Perhsps this is why I liked the + responsive readings hymns because it gave us a chance to stand up, and although grandfather could not carry a tune, I gathered from the words that there was something important going on here. I ~~didn't understand it but I gathered that this was not very important~~ I felt part o' an imprtant ceremonial thing going on in our community and this was the only t e I every saw most o' the people in all the houses together, dressed up and not busy.

Grandfather was not amusing. This is not to say he was unpleasant. He was just not full of witty things to say that later became aware that grandfathers were supposed to be. On the way home he might say, "Well, I wonder what your grandmother had for dinner." Or he might say, "I didn't think much of the sermon." Or he did. Or he might talk a little about his garden in which he never worked on Sunday or he might observe some matter of fact thing about the people we passed on the street which were not many. Usually we were all going in the same direction on Sunday either to or from church, and we walkd at respectable distances from each other in quiet twosomes or threesomes. If we passed five people in a group coming toward us they were likely to be catholics and grandfathers greeting was noticeably restrained as though our directions were not only geographical but in all probability eternal.

Sunday dinner was a glorious thing: a clean tablecloth, the silver set out in an orderly way with the napkins all tightly rolled in their rings, grandfather the most impressive of all because it was guarded by an eagle with red jewel eyes. His also was the chair with arms, and at the other end, near the kitchen, grandmother's willow chair. The dining room had a plate rack, on which, at neat intervals, were plates with pictures on them, a carving on a piece of coal of a coal mine, a plate that said pan american exhibition with a picture of President McKinley. The only addition to the collection I can remember over the years was a plate that had a picture of an airplane with the numbers NX211 which was the number on "Lindys plane". It was not pretty but it was interesting, especially the coal mine. In the corner of the room was a curved china cabinet with the good plates in it, and the good glass wear and the chrystal vases and the serving dishes that had been part of great grandfather's golden wedding anniversary gifts. We never used them except at thanksgiving. They were being saved.

In a ceremonial way, Sunday dinner was great grandfather's. He was a man in good clothes and a mustash, smelling of shaving lotion who treated his son and daughter in law in the intimate manner reserved for servants. But there was a certain grandeur to him. Dinner began about ten minutes after he came home from church services at the Baptist church, not the Methodist church where grandfather and I went. This separation had come about from some church feud which I never understood and which had nothing to do with theology. But great grandfather, before I was up for breakfast, would have set out for church with his gold watch chain and his alegator ~~wooden~~ carved ivory handled cane not to return until several minute after we had come home. The sight of him coming down the avenue was a signal for lively activity in the kitchen with grandmother warming and taking out of the oven and grandfather carrying in his vest and shirt sleeves. After great grandfather died we stopped on the way home from church at a corner store, not like the New York and big city corner stores but a store that was more like a neatly maintained cottage, to buy a newspaper-- but great grandfather didn't abide with funny papers and saw no need for news.

That it was grandfather's house was indicated only by the fact that he sat in the chair with the arms on it. Grandfather sat more or less like a guest commenting on the food with the assurance of a man who had the right to be objective, and more than once I can recall my grandmother biting her lip at some comment Great grandfather made about the texture of the chicken gravy or the lumps in the squash. But most of all the recollection of dinner recalls the grace. This was a ceremonial thing and by watching out from under my eyes while grandfather and ~~grand~~ great grandfather bowed their heads with their eyes closed I could see grandmother making a last check of the table

deciding what she must rush out to the kitchen to get as soon as the amen came. But for grandfather and great grandfather, the grace was a pack. It was the only point at which they mentioned love for each other or the world at large. Whatever connection our house had with any thing that we could not see on our street was summed up in the grace. In this act the food got sanctified and we were all dedicated. The purpose of it was never clear but somehow there was something as personal about it as the china closet and there was storing up of something that Grandfather felt he could call on later I am sure. What great grandfather thought I am not at all sure, but I think it was probably something that he had been brought up to have respect for.

He was a curious man, a sentimental, pompous man with respectability for himself. So badly did he wasn't a girl when my grandfather was born that he had named grandfather Burr D. Livermore because he had planned to name his daughter Birdie. Grandfather never recovered from this and all his life acted as though he was a bit of a disappointment to people, emancipating himself only by dint of holding onto opinions very strongly and without any particular talent.

Great grandfather and I sat opposite to each other on the sides of the table, ~~so quiet~~. That I kept quiet was not because I was afraid to talk but because in the midst of this vaguely grand situation I could not think of anything quite worthy to say. Dinner was quiet, but grandmother ~~wanted~~ interrupted each quiet passing of the dishes with the question "Is everything all right?" And usually she got her reward ~~when~~ when ~~grandfather~~ Great grandfather would roll up his napkin and pronounce the dinner satisfactory. This did not please grandmother so much because she could feel that she had satisfied great grandfather as because this was the sign that he was feeling well and contented enough to make no more trouble but sit on the front porch and smoke

his cigar contently by himself, thus releasing the ~~drify~~ rest of his family to go its own way. If he did not pronounce this particular benediction it meant he was in a poor humor and when he was in a poor humor no one was left untouched by the tension his bad humor could created.

With the ceremonies <sup>After</sup> dinner concluded Grandmother setting about the business of clearing the table, looking perhaps a little wistfully at the table as though there should be something else to say or do, than servant like go about the cleaning up, and grandfather, once agains in his shirt sleeves and vest, would go out on the back porch and gather up the pails of flowers, wrap them all in careul cones of newspapers. I would help by looking earnest and concerned for the blossoms lest they be crushed. Once wrapped, grandfather would put on his coat, and grandmother would come to the door and ~~we would~~ <sup>gather our bundles up, quietly and</sup> watch us go up the lane. Grandfather with his bundles and I with my curiosuty and the sence of company.

Fort Hill Cemetery was a mouple o' miles away, ~~off~~ past downtown and a few blocks past the county court house and the post office. The town was oposite end to; that part o' the city tha t once was fashionable now was shabby but the public buildings and the cemetery had been ~~poorly~~ laid out ~~when~~ before new fashions came. When I wnet with grandfather he would take a street car, a little twenty eight passenger a' air that bounced along with some o' the illusion o' carriage that ~~someday~~ had eluded its horses. Though downtown we would glide and out the other side o' the store section to a quiet street corner where, as you alighted form the street car, <sup>creating an</sup> one could see, at the end o' the side street opposite, the stone arch entrance to the cenemtary, like the gate o' an old walled city.

Decorating the graves was an enterprise ~~in~~ which I shared with grandfather in which we both ~~perhaps~~ felt free. I remember ~~had~~ a place where the drive wound up around the top of a ledge while ~~from~~ from one lip of the edge to the other there was a ~~grave~~ <sup>an unmetalled</sup> even path that dipped down and up in a cressent; it wasunn on the trip down to run it giving oneself to gravity and coasting up the opposite side.

The up ~~near~~ the top of Fort Hill there was the iron fenced in area where grandfathers aunt and uncle were buried. Near the bottom of the slope in a flat space Great Grandmother was burried and for the space in front of the tomb stone Grandfather reseved the best of the flowers. There seemed to be among the keepers of the graves a tendancy to borrow flower holders for grandfather was always searching for ~~one~~ the ~~one~~ that belonged to our graves, and muttering and scowling about the neighbors who robed them of their decorations. Scattered throughout the cemetery were ~~the~~ water saucets. Grandhter would first go to the graves gather up the pots and the metal cones with the spike in the bottom, carry them in a bundle to the water saucets, and wrince them out, filling them with fresh water, and here came in my only useful service ~~or~~ we would carry them brim ful, from the saucets back to the graves where grandfather would sort out the blossoms in appropriate piles, emphasising in each boquey the blossoms thought to be the favorites of those who rested there, lilacs for the aunt and uncle and bleeding hehrs ~~for~~ for his mother.

One the way home from the cemetery we would pass a monument that was distinguished from all the others for its size and plainness. It was a simple oblesque related to nothing else in the cemetery though not in any way discordant from it. In many ways it was the most eloquent of all, not part of any row but

especially solitary and especially silent. I remember the spring  
we came to the cemetery after I learned to read and found that  
there were words carved in the weathered marble. WHO IS THERE TO  
WEEP FOR LOGAN.

"Who is logan Grampa?"

" Logan, logan was an indian."

"What does that mean grampa?"

" A long time ago Logan was an indian chief  
~~and he lived near here,~~ <sup>on all</sup> But he was driven out and his family was  
killed. Who is there to weep for ~~logan?~~ <sup>because there was no one left to mourn him.</sup> is something he said after  
that happened. He meant that there was noone to weep for him with  
all his family killed." Who is there to weep for logan. Nothing  
~~even since that time has ever seemed so desolate.~~

Life with grandfather was always a little like going to the cemetery, there were always flowers being put on tombstones, the past was revered with a tenacity that was not without disappointment. The roots of the family were not in the small town in which I knew ~~the~~ but ~~in~~ in a village eighty miles away in the hilly country in the south eastern part of the state. Beyond that and farther back was legend, all carefully reported in a book that no one in my immediate family has ever read. There in the ~~steep~~ hilly land

~~Time~~ ~~from farming but for some~~ that brought risches to some families during the civil war from the

Others stayed near ~~to the army~~ ~~rested~~ trading ~~on~~ horses and to others by means of the hard training it imposed on its young ~~there~~ lived the poor ancestors of families still poor ~~now~~ and other now famous among the rich of the nation. There in the chancy speculation with futures, some men ~~died~~ made the choices that produced great fortunes, others chose the land and ~~disappeared~~ <sup>some</sup> their descendants disappears into the respectable middle classes of large cities. People always were leaving the villages and the

towns, moving on to other towns and on from there to cities. From obscure villages in which my great grandfather were ~~members~~ can the county from which my family came there came also the L. C. Smiths who manufactured <sup>of</sup> typewriters, and the Franklins who named an automobile <sup>one whose name was on an automobile (now absent)</sup> a famous violinist whose <sup>name</sup> became a rovers. and the Rockefellers from a little ways away. There were Butterfields and Lusks who made their name in education and politics. These were the names that related our family to the events of my grandfather's century, and their progress was the progress Grandfather took into account. To him ~~it~~ the world was Hartford mills, Center Lysle, Michigan hill and then people who had grown up there and gone out from thereto become famous.

Grandfather's yearning for the life of the small town was shared by many others, who came from there and one of the

meaning ful events was the reunions ~~that~~ periodically occurred during  
old hom e week, when the half dozen families still remaining i  
Hartford mills would call the ~~kids~~ <sup>cousins</sup> togahter. Idno not r call  
the details, but I do remember the trip in the chevrolet, the picnic in  
the church yard, the visit ing to the cemetary, the service in the  
church, which now was not used for regular services and need a a ndew  
roof, the experience o<sup>r</sup> distance among the families that came there,  
some with chauffeurs, one with a wife who would not leave the car but  
must be fed by the chau<sup>n</sup>eur, the hearty farm families, a second cousin  
whose imaculate living room smelled <sup>(or think)</sup> nicely of kerosene, Summer Winter Spring  
and Fall. We were welcome and glad to be there and there was frineship  
and talk o<sup>r</sup> old times in the shade o<sup>r</sup> trees my father had played under  
on his boyhood visits and trees my greatgradfathers father had planned  
But there was also a finality in the sence that each visit was a ~~a~~ final  
day in a lifetime; the town could never be put together again, would  
never be as good again. The church would never be wo white and  
dtraight again, the graves never again be fresh. Allthat remains from  
to generation among us  
generation is a pull back to the land, a yearning for roots and  
a sence o<sup>r</sup> place, and indentification with some source. Will this be  
lost? Is it a cultural thing that disappears from living bones when  
placeless rootless  
the appartment and the suburb has consumed all the children., and like  
logan there is none left to weep for all the past and all the suffereing  
and all the injustice, endured <sup>by</sup> mothers and children and men who  
rootless, placeless  
worked and died and left notheing but their children. And is  
this what people seek in the suburbs with their talk about their children.  
and ~~what~~ and is this the source o<sup>r</sup> the disillusionment---

I was old enough to watch a home being destroyed, put in packing boxes, piled in a truck and moved away. The comfortable chair in which I had been nursed became just something on the back o' a buckman and it never looked the same in any other place. The windows through which I had seen lightning for the first time and through with the roling sound o' thunder shook were looked thought <sup>Veronal for</sup> or the lastttime as I watched the truck pullm away. There were the cracks in the sidewalk <sup>state side</sup> I had learned to saksate arround, the humps in the walks from the elm roots, and the naked window s and the bare room in which I had lived and that wax the end o' Auburn.

There was no welcome in Rochester. For the first time I saw streets where people lived without trees and wide factory streets that were not main streets. It was raily when we moved into a house in Roenhester, and I crept to a window inthe attic and looked out on a city for the firsttime that was not my city and down whose street zi would never walk with myb grandfather, and somehow therewas another world that a did not know and sudedenly I was grown up in a di 'er fog was arround me. Inwas homesick.

I suspect thatoto my parents Inwas a big disappointkent. <sup>since the war (last w.)</sup> They were together for the first time but suddenly there was a geabout them also for they were not merely transplanted from one familiar locus to another but from one world to another. My father came to it not as a <sup>the city</sup> city to be transformed byn his personality but as an inhabitant to make out with in it. We borrowed a rugn from a sencond cousing for the dining room and a couch for the living room. And what was perhapx for them a big adventure diedn in my heart an partlyly intheiess. It was merely a city and we were better o' than many for their was <sup>own</sup> employment and my parenty were past o' their <sup>^</sup> generation.

The lady who lived upstairs (n there was always someone upstairs) was a nice lady who played valencia on her electric phonograph which was the loudest thing I had ever heard outside of a church. Down the street was the ball park for the international Legue team of Red Wings, beyond that a small park with paths in and out of the bushes and beyond that the school. Kindergartden and the first grade in auburn <sup>waged</sup> had been impressive but small, the sand box, the circle on the floor arround which we sat, the potted flowers, the curtains in the principals office. I learned to write with a pen and playwith other kids in the yard. These were very intimate things. There was no trouble except when, once on the way home in winter, I piked with a stick at an old robins nest in a small pine tree in the front yard of a strangers house and a strange lady (it was in~~e~~ two blocks away from where we lived) came out and gave me a very bad scolding, threatening at the end to have the police come and get me. I ran all the way home and hid -- too frightened to tell anyone of the crime I had committed. The fact is that many things inflicted on children by wayso<sup>n</sup> punishment went far beyond what was needed, but there was in the small town a conviction that the evil o<sup>f</sup> childr<sup>n</sup> went deep into their bould and that it was necessary to ritghten children to their very ~~blood~~ marrow to obtain the proper responce. It was because og<sup>r</sup> this that I began going home another way, past a family of Foots house. Therewas a foot girl in our class in kindergartden, a delightful and sweet little girl o<sup>f</sup> no particular individuality, whom I played with in school or a whole year before she tolle me that she was colored. Going her way I walked with her sometimes and once I may have called her Nigger, or someone else may have I can't remember, but she sat crying on the curbstone, and would not be consolded. It was the first time I remember seeing anyone cry except for being hit and it made an impression, wich I recall mainly for its latter

*On the way*

implications. From there home I passed a house where a prison guraed lived with a wife who was an invalid but who sat day after day in a shed that extened to the walk, weaving rugns on a loom that was the most ~~gradal~~ <sup>children said</sup> machinery I had ever seen. By some of the ~~beds~~ she was thought to be a witch but to me she was a wonderful shadowy lady who day after day allowed me to ~~through the square that was~~ look in ~~ana~~ a mystical world o<sup>n</sup> ~~secretly~~ producation, like nothing so much as pictures o<sup>n</sup> santa Clause workshop and the animated activities o<sup>n</sup> christmas windows in fancy department stores.

But school in Rochester and the walks home were not like this. The children were in groups and ~~mall~~ <sup>into</sup> gangs, and each prided itself on being tougher than the other but none o<sup>f</sup> them were very tough. But they were frightening enough to make me long badly to belong to one o<sup>f</sup> them. In the Spring they layed a game with sharp pointed sticks which they drove into the groung like daggers, harder than I could and if their stick did something heroic they had the right to bat your stick off as f<sup>r</sup> as they could, and I seemed always to be chasing stick dog like until I gave up the game and invented my own. I could run and hide and did and in the never never land o<sup>n</sup> the park bushes I would hide , indian like, droping clues only when my followers threatened to give up the search and abandon me to ~~play~~ my own game. But it was no fun.

I dont know if it was the knickers, the indifference o<sup>f</sup> the school teachers or my own frail ego and insecurity but schooo was not a great experience for me. A nice girl that sat opostime was carted away in a froth of epilepsy and somehow in her awkwardness there was all the awkwardness. There was no dignity to live, my own or otherw ~~and we were part of a city, and I never knew where my teacher lived or~~  
~~or where~~  
when she died ~~and I wanted to if ever I was~~